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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020

TAGS: PGOV PREL AU

SUBJECT: USAU: TANZANIAN PRESIDENT KIKWETE'S THOUGHTS ON
BURUNDI'S UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Classified By: S/A HOWARD WOLPE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

This message is from USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle.

¶1. (SBU) In a February 2 meeting with Tanzanian President Kikwete on the margins of the African Union (AU) Summit, U.S. Special Advisor for the Great Lakes Region Howard Wolpe raised concerns about the lack of international oversight of the peace process in the wake of the dismissal of Head of United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) Youssef Mahmoud and the withdrawal of the South African protection mission. Wolpe also discussed the recent East African Community (EAC) electoral support mission to Burundi and the fact that its draft report is awaiting Burundian government endorsement before it can deploy observers.

¶2. (C) Kikwete shared Wolpe's concerns about the lack of international facilitation and promised to talk to United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios about a replacement for Mahmoud. Wolpe said Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza should send an official letter of request for election observation support to the EAC. Kikwete agreed. (Note: Wolpe subsequently met with Nkurunziza who assured him that he would make the request.)

¶3. (C) Wolpe suggested that the EAC might want to appoint an elder statesman such as former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa to coordinate international facilitation of the electoral process. Kikwete suggested that a group of elder statesmen from the region might be the best formula, similar to what had been done in the run-up to 2006 elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Wolpe agreed.

¶4. (C) On recent arrests for suspected coup plotting in Burundi, Kikwete reported that he had spoken to Nkurunziza who said the plotters were planning the assassination of Burundian general officers, and not a coup d'etat. Nonetheless, Kikwete wondered as to the ultimate end of the conspiracy. The silver lining, said Kikwete, is that the conspiracy was not ethnically based and that there were reportedly both Hutu and Tutsi soldiers involved.

¶5. (C) U.S. Deputy Special Advisor Yellin noted that elements of the CNDD-FDD were fomenting violence against political opponents and appeared determined to try to fix the elections. Yellin suggested that it would be useful for Kikwete to raise this issue with Nkurunziza. Kikwete said it was true that party cadre were engaged in inappropriate behavior and promised to discuss the issue with Nkurunziza.

Wolpe stated that the inappropriate behavior did not seem to emanate from Nkurunziza but from hard-liners within the party. Kikwete agreed.

¶6. (U) Also in attendance at the meeting were U.S. Deputy Special Advisor Yellin and USAU Military Advisor Ellington.

¶7. (U) S/A Wolpe has cleared this cable.
YATES